CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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LETTER DATED 20 APRIL 2000 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE TRANSMITTING THE TEXT OF A STATEMENT MADE ON 14 APRIL 2000 BY MR. VLADIMIR V. PUTIN, ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, IN CONNECTION WITH THE RATIFICATION BY THE STATE DUMA OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION OF THE START-II TREATY AND OF THE PACKAGE OF 1997 AGREEMENTS ON ANTI-MISSILE DEFENCE

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a statement issued on 14 April 2000 by the acting President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, in connection with the adoption by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation of laws on the ratification of the START-II Treaty and of the package of 1997 agreements on anti-missile defence.

I should be grateful if the statement could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to the delegations of all member States of the Conference and non-member States of the Conference participating in its work.

(Signed): Vasily Sidorov
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Head of the delegation of the
Russian Federation to the
Conference on Disarmament

GE.00-61084 (E)

STATEMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE ADOPTION BY THE STATE DUMA OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION OF LAWS ON THE RATIFICATION OF THE START-II TREATY AND OF THE PACKAGE OF 1997 AGREEMENTS ON ANTI-MISSILE DEFENCE

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation has just adopted a decision on the ratification of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States of America on the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, more commonly known as the START-II Treaty, and the package of 1997 agreements on anti-missile defence. This is a wise and important decision. It is important in terms both of the national interests of our State and of the interests of international peace and security as a whole.

For the Russian Federation, the conclusion of the START-II Treaty provides it with the opportunity to guarantee its security on the basis of parity with the United States of America - at a level of strategic offensive arms lower than before, half the level of the START-I Treaty currently in force and, of course, at less expense.

The ratification of the START-II Treaty opens the path to the launching of official talks on further reductions of Russian and United States strategic arsenals within the framework of a START-III Treaty. We are prepared to reduce our strategic offensive arms - naturally, on the basis of reciprocity with the United States - to a level lower than that provided for in the 1997 Russian-American agreement in Helsinki, i.e. to 1,500 warheads, instead of 2,000-2,500.

The decision of the State Duma is a good and positive signal to the international community. As a great nuclear Power, the Russian Federation is demonstrating its sense of responsibility, as it makes steady progress in the direction of arms reduction and disarmament. We are setting an example of practical fulfilment of the obligations assumed under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, thereby strengthening the regime established by that Treaty.

There is another vitally important aspect of the decision adopted by the State Duma.

In recent time, the world has been giving a great deal of attention to the problem of the proliferation of missiles and missile technologies and there has been talk of a growing so-called "missile threat" and of the need to take urgent measures to counter that threat. One such measure, put forward by the United States, is the creation of a national anti-ballistic missile defence system, which is in conflict with the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM Treaty).

We advocate the adoption, together with other States, of measures to counteract the proliferation of missiles and missile technologies. In our view, however, this should not be done by dismantling existing agreements in the area of disarmament - particularly the ABM Treaty. We favour a different route: the strengthening of existing non-proliferation regimes and the elaboration of new arms reduction treaties. The Russian Federation's ratification of the START-II Treaty represents a real contribution to those efforts.

We are counting on the United States to make the same constructive choice. The United States has yet to conclude the ratification procedures that will bring START-II into force and to approve the package of agreements on ABM issues, which strengthen the 1972 Treaty. The success of the disarmament process and the formation of a new political climate in the world depend, first and foremost, on the actions taken by our two countries.

(Signed): Vladimir V. Putin
Acting President of the
Russian Federation

Moscow, 14 April 2000